1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

been given through its use to substantiate the many charges of cannibalism in Haiti that have been made. Yet those who, desirous of establishing such cannibalism, quote this passage from St. Mery do not always remember to quote it in its complete context:

> "Some of these butchers of human flesh are also brought to Santo Domingo . . . where, as in Africa, they are the horror of the other Negroes, notably of the Congos, who, because of their nearness to them [in Africa], are most exposed to their cruelties." [4]

These are thus the tribes who were presumably the most important in the Negro ancestry of the Haitians of today. Was there any least common denominator in language which made it possible for slaves fresh from Africa to communicate with one another after their arrival in Haiti? Was there sufficient similarity in their cultures so that this might form the basis for a retention of African beliefs and behavior despite the vicissitudes of slavery? And what were the characteristics of the African civilizations of these people?

The picture of West African life, as it is commonly drawn, emphasizes the great number of small tribal groups following dissimilar modes of life, speaking mutually unintelligible languages, and worshipping different gods. In a very general sense this is not untrue. On the face of it, the number of languages that are spoken in the area from which the slaves were derived would seem to have constituted an effective barrier not alone to any concerted action on the part of slaves, but even to communication between them, especially since in many regions of the New World it was a fixed policy to separate slaves from the same tribe.

Yet behind this semblance of sharp dissimilarities lies a basic unity of language and culture in all of West Africa, so that though languages were and are mutually unintelligible, structurally and idiomatically they are much the same. This

1; Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

is why Créole, not alone in Haiti, but also in Martinique, in Trinidad, and in Louisiana, like Negro English in other portions of the New World, shows such consistency in structure and idiom. The slaves, having mastered a requisite number of words in the language of their masters, merely poured them into this mold of their own linguistic patterns and, approximating the phonetic values of such words in terms of the West African modes of speech, thus established a means of communication between one another, no matter what their tribal derivation.[8]

The region of West Africa which furnished the slaves was an area of great and settled political entities. Here were to be found the Fula and Mandingo empires in the western portion of the area, and the Hausa kingdom in northern Nigeria; the Ashanti and Fanti states in the Gold Coast, and, to the east, the kingdoms of Dahomey, of Yoruba, and of Benin; southward, those of Kongo and Loango. In all this vast territory law and order reigned, and regimentation of behavior under the direction of kings and priests was the rule. With this went a discipline that so deeply stamps African tradition that even the many years of European dominance have not been able to efface it.

The social life in this area, as well as its political organization, is to a very considerable extent a unit. Polygyny, the institution whereby a man may have more than one wife, is found in the entire region. Everywhere descent is counted on one side of the family, either the male or the female, and the larger significant relationship groupings that are composed of those who regard themselves as descended from a single and often mythical totemic ancestor are equally characteristic. Discipline rules within the family as well as outside it and is exacted from the earliest days in the life of a child. Needless to say, it is a far cry from this ordered state of society to the disorganized life which the stereotype of the "savage African" envisages.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

d'Angole) is obviously Angola, while the designations Ibo and Congo speak for themselves. Simbi is a Congo deity, as are Bumba and Lemba. Finally, in the categories of gods important in the regions of Haiti other than Mirebalais are the Loa Sénégal, and the Loa Mondong, both of which are names of African tribes mentioned in the early literature as contributing to the Haitian slave population. But all recognition of geographical names as such has disappeared, and they have been transmuted into designations of gods.

Outstanding here is the word *vodun* itself, already indicated as Dahomean, where it is a general term for "deity," though in Haiti its use has become more restricted and the symbol for deity has become the word *loa*, or *mystère*. The origin of the designation *loa*, which has been claimed to be a corruption of the French *roi*, is debatable. It is true that in West Africa certain deities are regarded as kings, yet this derivation is not convincing in view of the fact that in the *vodun* cult as found in Haiti at present or as described in earlier sources the *loa* are never generally referred to as kings, something that tends to strengthen statements that have been made to the effect that the word comes from the language of a Congo tribe.[1] The source of the root *hun-*, which figures in the terms *hungan*, *hunsi*, and *humfort*, is clear, for in Dahomey it is a synonym for the word *vodun*. *Hungan* and *hunsi* are even more definitely traceable than *humfort*, since the ending *-gan*, the Dahomean word for chief, designates the priest as the chief of the spirits, and *-si*, "wife," is employed in the sense of "wife of the god" or his devotee, in Africa as in Haiti. The female counterpart of *hungan*, *mambu*, cannot be definitely assigned, but may be of Bantu derivation, and is certainly an African word.

Other uncontaminated Africanisms can be discerned in the attitude of the Haitians toward the *loa* and in the ceremonies for them. One of the most characteristic is the inheritance of *loa* in families, a direct survival of the belief which not only

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

CHAPTER XV

SOME WIDER IMPLICATIONS

158 182 No student of Haitian institutions can elude a progressively sharpened awareness of the psychological conflict that is being waged within the frame of Haitian society. And though examples of the divergent forces which lie at the root of this conflict have been set forth in the preceding chapters, some of the more important of these may be recalled here.

178 182 595 158 In his social relationships the Haitian is constantly exposed to the demands of a code of morality which requires marriage to be monogamic. Yet the African tradition of polygyny, and the undoubtedly satisfactory arrangements of both an economic and a social nature that can be made under the terms of plural marriage, pull him toward this form. The case is even 178 182 771 158 stronger in the field of religion, which in Haiti is not a thing remote from life, but an intimate part of existence. On the one hand, because of his inheritance of the *loa*, he must meet his obligations toward these ancestral gods of Africa who punish harshly those who fail them, so that he must either continue their traditional worship or learn to know the consequences of their anger. Yet on the other hand, the priest thunders his [191] maledictions and threats of eternal damnation—in Mirebalais, at least, often in Créole, a language which the peasant can understand—against those of his flock, the vast majority

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

of whom are sincere practicing voduists as they are sincere practicing Catholics, who do not put an end to the worship of false gods.

The absence of graphic and plastic arts in Haitian culture, commented upon in a preceding chapter, must also be regarded as a case in point in laying bare the anatomy of this inner conflict of tradition, since it is important to recognize that the suppression of these forms of the prevalent African tradition would seem to have lost to the Haitian an important outlet for the resolution of inner tensions caused by pent-up drives. Even more revealing is the substitution of games of chance for those games of skill which in most African and New World Negro societies are played for their own sake alone—that is, for the prestige accruing to the skillful player. The strain that accompanies this play for stakes, often of no inconsiderable value in terms of the resources of the players, is patent to the most casual observer. The question here arises whether or not the craving for excitement of this kind may not in Haiti be traceable to the inhibition, under slavery, of some of the more gracious forms of African life which there make for social equilibrium. Might it not represent a kind of compensation for the thwarted psychic ease with which a culturally undisturbed people approach their own existence—a state of being which, in contrast, is quite lacking in Haiti?

A singularly illuminating comment upon these manifestations of instability in Haitian life has been made by Dr. J. C. Dorsainvil, who in drawing his conclusion called both upon his own medical training and on his experience of many years as a profound student of his own people. "It has perhaps been insufficiently remarked to what an astonishing degree the Haitian people live on their nerves."[1] As might be expected, he advances a number of possible explanations of the causes that underlie this state of "living on nerves." The wear and tear of life in the tropics is given as one reason; another is the excitement of the *vodun* dances with their frenzy of possession;

2; Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

one with the Holy Virgin. St. Jacques has become one with Ogoun, St. George with Linglessou, St. Anthony and St. Christopher with Legba, guardian of the highway, and St. Nicholas with Marassa Trois. In northern Haiti the word *zange* (from the French, *les anges*—the angels) sometimes is used synonymously with loa or mystère. As for the saints, they are sometimes identified with one loa, sometimes with another.

No one in Haiti knows all the loa. Some of them are so ancient as to be nearly forgotten. Others are spontaneous creations or revelations on the part of a possessed person. Some loa names may be the result of a devotee's seizing upon a word or phrase in a religious song and imparting to it the concept of a loa. Sometimes a word in a phrase of *langage* is taken to be a loa's name, and sometimes agglutinated Creole words become the name of a loa.

The possibility of frequent additions to the list of loa is heightened still further by the general illiteracy of the Haitian people and the lack of a stabilizing influence in the written word. The Creole language has marked regional differences. Furthermore, change of consonants or vowels is a commonplace occurrence, so that a single loa's name may have several forms. One may well wonder whether Aza, Adja, and Akadja were not originally a single individual. Nevertheless, in the Haitian scheme they are now different personalities.

There is one more complicating factor in identifying loa or compiling a comprehensive roster—the use of multiple names. In addition to the names by which they are generally known, many of the deities have a variety of nicknames. Some of these nicknames are in Creole, some appear to be of West African provenience. The deity Agwé, for example, is frequently called Coqui-nan-Mer—Coqui-in-the-Sea. A loa may have four, five, or even more such nicknames. Sometimes short forms are used. Damballa may be called Da, Sobo may be called So, Azaka may be called Za. In addition, some deities have "secret" names, which theoretically are known only to the priesthood and the inner circle of servitors. Multiple naming and the reservation of certain names for special occasions appear to have West African precedents.

In the naming of the loa no neat and methodical system is apparent at any point. The "surname," or what may be in some cases a generic designation, may appear first or last. One may hear Ogoun Chango or Chango Ogoun, Général Brisé or Brisé Général, Congo Savane or Savane Congo. (This is characteristic of everyday speech. A former president of Haiti, Nord Alexis, is often called Alexis Nord.) The "surname" can be a description of "tribal" or "national" affiliation, regional provenience, character and temperament, or an indication of function. Thus we find

[P. 338]

4. *Notes on Orthography*

104 The problem of putting the Creole language into writing has confronted
● 190 Haitian and non-Haitian scholars and writers for some time. During
87 the past decade the problem has been an acute one for education au-
14 thorities in Haiti. While there developed a consensus that teaching the
[212] largely illiterate population would have to be done in Creole and not in French, there remained a controversy about the system of orthography that should be used. One of the first attempts to teach Haitian children in their own language was made by Christian Beaulieu, a Haitian educator who worked out a written method based on traditional French orthography.[1] Subsequently, a simpler system was devised by a clergyman, the Reverend H. Ormond McConnell. Although it had numerous detractors among those who favored French orthography, it was found to be far more suitable for educational purposes. The American linguist Robert A. Hall, Jr., carried out a study, the findings of which supported the McConnell method as "perfectly phonemic and at the same time wholly practicable in that it uses only characters already available in print shops and on typewriters."[2]

104 Some Creole texts from Haiti and other West Indian islands, taken down by researchers and scholars, have been transcribed in the McConnell orthography, or in a modified one known as the McConnell-
[114] Laubach system. It is my opinion that although the system is admirable for teaching purposes, and adequate for recording texts for scholarly needs, it is a disadvantage to a reader who has a French vocabulary at his command but who is not familiar with the McConnell orthography. The extent to which this system can disguise a language is easily seen if it is used, for example, to transcribe Jamaican speech. The effect is identical on French words or words of French origin. The Haitian proverb "Run from the rain, fall into the big river" is written by Hall in the McConnell-Laubach orthography: ***Kouri pou-lapli, tòbé nè-grè***

1 [UNESCO, The Haiti Pilot Project, P. 39. Cf. P. 355, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2 [Ibid. Cf. P. 355, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

vivè.[3] A system which permits recognition of the original French words would transcribe the proverb: *Couri pou' lapluit, tombé nan grand rivié.*

In this book, I have in the main used the semi-French forms. Regardless of the status of Creole as a separate language, a great part of its vocabulary is drawn from French, old or modern, and it has seemed unnecessary to disguise the connections of Creole with its antecedents. Nevertheless, I am aware that some of my orthographic choices coincide more with the McConnell-Laubach system than with the Gallic, and some may appear to belong to neither. I hope, however, that my transcribed texts will be easily read.

In most sociological and anthropological reports on Haiti which include texts the transcriptions are based on modified French orthography. Nevertheless, there have been many inconsistencies and contradictions, as there well may be within the covers of this book. One reason may be an inadequate understanding of the Creole language. A second reason can be, and often is, differences of pronunciation in various regions.

But the most significant differences occur in setting down words of non-French or probably non-French origin. One of the more noteworthy of these is *Vodoun*—a very important word without which it would be very difficult to write of Haitian life. Writers and anthropologists have spelled it in the following ways: Melville J. Herskovits—*Vodu* and *Vodun;* George Eaton Simpson—*Vodun* (after an earlier trial of *Vôdoun*); Odette Mennesson Rigaud—*Vodou;* Milo Rigaud—*Voudoo;* Robert A. Hall, Jr.—*Vaudoun;* Selden Rodman—*Vaudou;* Maya Deren—*Voudoun;* Eugène Aubin—*Vaudoux.*

Still other variations are to be found, particularly in the early literature on Haiti. In view of the general lack of agreement on this matter, it is not difficult to defend my own choice of *Vodoun* (French phonetics), which I used in previous writings.

Other important words which have numerous spellings are *hounfor* (*hunfor, humfor, hunfort, humfort, houmphor,* etc.), *hounsi* (*hunsi, hounçi,* etc.), and the names of various loa.

[3] [Hall and others, Haitian Creole, p. 199. Cf. p. 355, Category 116. -- Analyst]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

114 treatment. In the absence of sufficient analytic material on the inter-
121 vening years since his book was written, a prefatory note such as this can do little more than comment on Haitian society, either in terms of its present design or in terms of the recent events that may have modified it.

121
114 The central thesis of Leyburn's book is that Haitian society is sharply
565 divided into two segments, and that the national institutional struc-
[178] ture is such that no significant alteration in that division has occurred in the entire course of Haiti's history as a sovereign nation. At the base of the society is the rural agricultural sector, making up perhaps as much as 95 per cent of the population; at the top the elite, which dominates the governmental apparatus and all national institutions. These two segments of the society differ, in Leyburn's view, in all important regards: level of income, source of income, education, language, religion, social forms, values and attitudes, and all else. By carefully describing the history of Haitian society from the eve of the revolution until the midst of the United States occupation, he reveals both the origin of this vast social cleavage and the various means employed for its perpetuation. Leyburn was so impressed by the gap which separated yeomanry and elite that he chose to label these social segments castes rather than classes. Members of the elite earn their livings as rentiers, merchants, professionals, and in government, and never engage in manual labor of any sort. They are predominantly urban in residence; their sons attend private lower schools, and then
[191] go on to higher education, usually abroad. They are French-speaking,
[197] although they also speak Creole, Haiti's national language. Elite re-
[58] ligion is Catholicism, elite forms of marriage and domestic organiza-
[59] tion are "legitimate" and "western." Elite members view themselves
[829] as a kind of aristocracy, and feel little commonality in their sharing of Haiti and of Haitian history with the yeomen.

114 In sharp contrast, the yeomanry is rural, poor, works the land, is
565 illiterate and Creole-speaking only, believes in *vodoun* rather than in
191 orthodox Catholicism, usually marries by common law and is some-
771 times polygynous, and remains substantially isolated from the outer
583 world. Finally and importantly—though its particular significance is
595 changing—the elite differs from the rural sector in that the country-
144 man is predominantly negroid in phenotype, while members of the elite are prevailingly lighter-skinned.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

The distinction between castes on the basis of occupation is nowhere more clearly seen than in the feminine sphere. The peasant woman, from childhood onward, is an indefatigable laborer, absolutely indispensable to the economic life of the country. She not only performs the usual domestic functions but works in the fields as well. She carries marketable goods, sometimes for miles, to the town for sale. The aristocratic woman, on the other hand, is rarely active in business. Indeed, until very recent years no career was open to her outside the home, nor would custom have allowed her to follow one; even now, teaching and a few clerical positions in government service are her only business opportunities. She directs the household economy but has servants if she can possibly afford them. Her place is definitely in the home.

The second infallible test of membership in the élite caste is education and an ability to speak French. When Haiti was a slave colony belonging to France, the hundreds of thousands of blacks imported from Africa had no common tongue, coming as they did from wide stretches of the continent; the French spoken by their overseers, a development of the Norman dialect,[3] became their one language, known as Créole. Every Haitian, high and low, knows and uses this language, for nursemaids speak it to the upper-class children in their charge, and all servants speak it. The élite consequently learn it at a tender age, and must use it in all their dealings with the lower orders. Among themselves, however, they speak French. The official language of the country is French. To speak correct French is an immediate announcement that one has had the advantage of schooling and has been in contact with the aristocracy. Theoretically, Haitian education is free and democratic; actually, no peasant child could be spared from labor long enough for schooling, or find money for proper clothes to go to school in.

Inevitably the standard of living is a reflection of caste membership. "The élite wear shoes," explained General Butler laconically to the United States Senate investigating committee, when asked what characterized the classes of Haiti. His elliptical remark is true. Peasants, indeed, could not afford to purchase shoes, but more particularly they could not afford to dress up to the standard set by the shoes. When a man of the masses dons the castoff shoes of some aristocrat, the logical assumption by everyone is that this man is pre-

3. See chap. XVIII.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

XVIII

THE CRÉOLE LANGUAGE

JUST as Haiti is a country of two distinct social strata, so it possesses two distinct languages, French and Créole. Only the élite speak French, but everyone in the country, from the president to the humblest dullard, speaks Créole. Aristocrats call the latter language disparagingly a *patois*. But is it? When does a patois or a dialect become a true language? When it has definite rules of grammar, declension, rhetoric? Créole has them all, even though the users are unaware of the rules. When it acquires the dignity of a literature? Increasingly the most original Haitian authors write their novels and poems in Créole or with large passages in that tongue—and did English suddenly cease to be a patois and become a language only when Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* appeared? When it is the language of passion, of sorrow, of delicate nuance? Here more than anywhere Créole meets the requirements, as any honest Haitian would confess by his lapse into Créole at moments of emotion. When it gains wide concurrence? No Haitian is ignorant of Créole.

Two centuries have witnessed the birth of this new tongue, but because it has been the speech of the lower orders this has not been accounted a noteworthy phenomenon, has not been praised as a philological achievement, has only recently been studied by linguists. Most people have been content to regard it as a debasement of French—and poor French at that. Yet were not Italian and French likewise debasements of Latin by the common folk, and English even more of a debasement and a hodgepodge? In 1700 Créole existed only in germ; by 1800 it was already formed—a kind of social cement which held together all that diffuse humanity which was shortly to become an independent nation.

Créole is not, as most people (even cultured Haitians) assume, the degeneration of French which occurred when benighted African slaves tried to learn and speak a new language. On the contrary, it was already a language when the slaves were brought into Saint-Domingue. They learned it quickly, and in the course of two hundred years they and their descendants, who have known no other tongue, have modified it only as any people slowly transform

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

197 a language into their daily speech. What the Americans have done to English, the Haitians in general have done to Créole. It is pertinent briefly to review the early history of Créole in order to comprehend the distinctly Haitian contributions to the language.

175 579 Through most of the seventeenth century Caribbean waters were full of pirates and buccaneers preying upon Spanish shipping. The effective monopoly which lordly Spain held in the preceding century over the trade of Europe with her rich Mexican and South American colonies began, in the early years of the new century, to crumble before the ingenious, speedy, and daring assaults of non-Spanish raiders. French, Dutch, and English sailors were all ready to try their hand at capturing laden Spanish ships. The rich cargoes of gold, silver, and merchandise were alluring enough to make the risk seem worth taking. And indeed the risk was not too great, for Spain's stately galleons were antiquated and cumbersome, generally no match for the flyboats[1] which had speed and much greater manageability. More and more Spanish control over the Caribbean, the Spanish Main, declined as the freebooters increased.

175 579 648 French sailors were among the most numerous and reckless of the gadflies who made life miserable for the Spanish traders. Drawn from the northern and northwestern provinces of France, these men had been seafarers all their lives. Harrying Spanish shipping was the most lucrative career for French sailors, and as the seventeenth century wore on their numbers in the Caribbean increased. By 1660 they had established a raiding base on La Tortue, an island off the northern coast of Haiti, where they developed a characteristic way of life —economic, political, and social—between raids.[2] Their presence near Haiti gave France a claim, in the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), to the western part of the island. For the next hundred years this region was to be known as Saint-Domingue.

175 579 197 Créole was born of buccaneering. In the seventeenth century the French of Île-de-France had not yet supplanted the dialects of the French districts; the buccaneers consequently spoke their native speech, and since Norman sailors far outnumbered the others

[175] [192]

1. Origin of "flibustier," "filibuster," and "freebooter."

2. It was here that they came to be called "buccaneers." They raided the relatively deserted main island of Haiti (then still under Spanish control) for cattle roaming wild. These cattle they cooked over an open fire, with a certain kind of wood; the process was called "boucanning," and they themselves "boucaniers." They imported wives from the seaport towns of Normandy, and families began to be raised on La Tortue.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Norman French became the dominant tongue of the French buccaneers. Words were naturally added from the patois of the neighboring French provinces of Picardy, Brittany, and Anjou, but Norman remained the matrix.[3] With La Tortue as their home base, the buccaneers roamed the Caribbean, coming into constant contact with other people—contact which left its mark, as meetings generally do, upon the speech of the travelers.

There were still Indians left in some of the islands, and Indians outnumbered Spaniards on the mainland. From these aborigines Créole borrowed many individual words, these being generally the names of things—flora and fauna, food, objects of daily life more or less common throughout the Caribbean world.[4] The grammatical contributions of the Indians were apparently only an emphasis upon tendencies already present in Norman French, such as that of keeping the verb form constant while making other words in the sentence do the work of indicating past, present, or future, continuous or completed action, and the like.

Engaged in buccaneering with the French were hundreds of English privateers. Often English and French raided in partnership; for many years both groups shared La Tortue. This contact left a heavy mark upon Créole—a congenial one, indeed, for Norman French had been for more than four centuries the official language of England. Now in the seventeenth century English was giving back to Norman many words in exchange for the ones it had taken.[5] More important than its verbal gift, however, was the influence it exerted toward a simple syntax. As compared with French forms,

3. An outstanding linguist, Jules Faine, in *Philologie créole*, p. 1, estimates that three out of four words in Créole are Norman.

4. A very few of these Indian words have become familiar in French, and still fewer in English; but one finds most of them, in one form or another, in the whole Caribbean basin. Examples are:

agouti, a small rodent
atoutou, a dish whose base is corn
caiman, alligator
iguane, a large lizard
avocat, the avocado pear
calebasse, calabash
corossol, a green prickly fruit
gouyave, guava
guame, yam
hamac, hammock
ouragan, hurricane
bayahonde, a very hard wood
campêche, another hard wood
mabouya, small lizard
barbaco, barbecue
cassave, a starch plant
lambi, a mollusk or conch
tom-tom, a purée of bananas

5. Henry Moiry, *Glossaire comparatif Anglo-Normand* (Caen, 1888), points out that the modern Norman dialect contains more than 5,000 words common to English and Norman, but not recognized in official French.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Norman ones were less complicated; English, simpler still, reënforced the Norman tendency.

From the Spaniards of the Caribbean region Créole borrowed not only nouns (generally the most assimilable of words), but a large number of adjectives, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and certain subtler characteristics of speech.

This amalgam, then, three quarters Norman French, was the Créole language as of 1697 when France acquired Saint-Domingue, when buccaneering became unprofitable, and many of the filibusters settled down to begin a respectable life as plantation owners in the new colony. African slaves were soon imported to satisfy the demand for labor. First a few, then thousands a year and increasing thousands, were brought to Saint-Domingue. In all externalities, of which language is one, slaves must yield up their old ways and take on new. The question of interest here is to what extent the Negroes influenced Créole, giving it an "African" character.

The answer, surprising at first, is that the Negro influence was almost negligible.

In the first place, Créole was now already a language with a rich vocabulary, all the grammatical equipment, and the necessary regularities. The slaves came to the colony from all parts of Africa, and so with widely differing languages. Linguistic maps of Africa indicate the presence of hundreds of dialects up and down the west coast; tribes living fifteen miles apart spoke languages which, although belonging to the same stock, were as different as Spanish and Italian from each other. Owing to the habit of dispersing the slaves, the average Negro had no common basis of understanding with his fellow slaves on the same plantation. Practically all white foremen and overseers gave orders in Créole; this within one generation became the *lingua franca* of the plantations, an economic necessity, and socially indispensable.

In the second place, there was in Saint-Domingue no equivalent to the familiar objects of life in Africa. Trees, houses, earth there were, of course, but different kinds of trees, houses, and soil. Economic tasks were performed in a different manner with new techniques and organization. Every outward form of life was foreign to the African background. Even assuming that there had been a common Negro speech, it would have found little to attach itself to in the New World. It should be noted that Negroes likewise made few contribu-

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175
177
197

tions to the English language in the southern United States, where they were slaves for seventy years longer than in Haiti.

175
567

Common African economic ways yielded to the plantation system and slavery; the Negroes had no opportunity to govern themselves or settle their own disputes; they mated rather than married; their families might be broken up if the master wished to sell a slave. The one part of life in which they were permitted to follow unhindered their African ways was the intimate one of religion which, since it needed no buildings or organization, did not interfere with work, and could be entirely personal and private, was not suppressed. As has been pointed out, the Dahomean form of religion prevailed over all others and, modified, gained wide adherence among the slaves. It is precisely in Vodun that Créole has taken over its only important African words, such as Vodun, zombi, houngan, marassa, loa, houmfort, bocor, ouanga.

175
197
194

It would be erroneous to imply that the Negroes had no effect upon the language of which they soon became the predominant users.[6] Their operations were of a subtle sort, however. As with the Negroes of the United States, the letter "r" proved difficult, and often disappeared altogether, leaving many words softly slurred. "Marcher," for example, generally sounds as if it were *ma'ché*. Likewise in the course of years they gave the language their own accent, their own modulation and tone, which make Créole sound different on their lips from a white man's way of speaking it. Some scholars attribute this to a *racial* influence—that is, to the morphology of the Negro throat and tongue. It might be pointed out to the contrary that Americans, white like the English, have given the mother tongue *their* own accent, modulation, and tone. It has certainly not yet been proved that race has anything to do with speech.

175
192

Words in imitation of a sound grow up in every language. Several western African dialects, especially Mandingue, seemed fond of onomatopoeia; in Haiti, consequently, one hears many an expressive additional word. Moreau de Saint-Méry[7] noticed this in colonial Saint-Domingue, citing such cases as the addition of "*bap*" to the verb "*tomber*," if one had fallen down lightly, or "*boum*" if heavily;

[174]

6. Suzanne Sylvain, *Le Créole haïtien* (Wetteren, Belgium, 1936), p. 10, says that although the African contribution to Haitian Créole is generally considered to be slight, she has personally found 170 words of undeniable African origin, and feels sure that there are many more.

7. *Description . . . de . . . Saint-Domingue*, II, 36–37.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Only a beginning has been made of collecting the thousands of "Cric? Crac!" stories current in Haiti.

It is only recently that people have written Créole, so that there is no standard orthography. Every writer spells words phonetically, with consequent irregularities, and with wide differences between two people writing the same thing. Recent etymological studies may lead eventually to a dictionary and a standard spelling. In order that the reader may see the resemblance of Créole to French, yet its differences from that language, we shall quote a part of one of La Fontaine's fables put into Créole verse by Georges Sylvain.[10] His own French retranslation accompanies the fable, turning such phrases as "female pig" into "sow."

Nan temps toutt bett té palé,
Té g'ain (palant pa respé)
Té g'ain gnou fémel cochon.
Zott connin gen cochon bon?
Cila-là té fait zanmi
Avec gnou fémel chien, qui
Té prett pou mi bas. Chien-là,
Gnou jou, dit cochon con ça:
"Moin pré pou moin accouché,
"Ma comé, t'en pri! souplé,
"Pémett moin prété gnou coin
"Nan pac ou, pou pititt moin."

Au temps où toutes les bêtes parlaient,
Il y avait (sauf votre respect)
Il y avait une truie.
Vous savez comme les truies sont bonnes gens?
Celle-ci avait fait amitié
Avec une chienne, qui
Était sur le point de mettre bas. La chienne
Un jour, dit à la truie:
"Me voilà près d'accoucher,
"Ma commère, je vous en prie, s'il vous plaît,
"Permettez-moi d'emprunter un coin
"De votre parc, pour mes enfants."[11]

The terseness of the language is fascinating, a situation is hit off precisely in a few words: a stuffed shirt has been deflated, and the truth has been told. A Haitian was heard to say, "Nègue riche li mulatte; mulatte pauvre li nègue"—a rich Negro is accounted a mulatto; a poor mulatto is to all intents and purposes no better than a Negro. And there is a profound comment on the whole caste system.

Wherever the French went in the Caribbean region the Créole language spread—in Louisiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana. Each region has its own peculiarities, but in general it may be said that these other regions show much more French (as distinct from Norman) influence on Créole, and much less Spanish and English influence. Similarly in Haitian towns, where the élite speak French

10. *Cric? Crac! Fables de La Fontaine racontées par un montagnard haïtien et traduites en vers créoles* (Port-au-Prince, 1929), p. 21.
11. "Zott" means "vous autres"; "gnou" is "une."

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Similarly in Haitian towns, where the élite

197 and where French is taught in the schools, the Créole is less "pure" than in the untutored countryside. Even there the language is changing, for there is steadily operating that "law of simplification" which reduces the complications of language when it has only an oral tradition."[12] Abridgment occurs more and more frequently, agglutination is more apparent, and words tend toward the monosyllabic.

191 Everyone in Haiti speaks and understands Créole. Nursemaids
197 teach it to their élite charges, so that children know it from infancy; élite lovers lapse into its expressive phrases in order to say something particularly intimate which might sound sentimental in French; priests must use it in their parish work if they are to be understood at all. Even the élite presidents have found it wise to speak often to the countrypeople in their own tongue. The gendarmes would be helpless in their police work without it, as would the agricultural, health, and other governmental services. It is the language in which all the small business of Haiti is conducted.[13] Ernest Douyon has written brilliantly and revealingly about it:

> If, on the one hand, we have a business language, an official tongue, which is French, our true maternal language, on the other hand, that one which we first lisp, that of the country as a whole (I had almost said "of the true country," for such is the case), that of the city people as well as of countryfolk, that of all families whatever their differences in education, the language one hears not only in humble huts but in luxurious villas, not only in offices or among the masses but also in private apartments and salons, that which for the crudest as for the most finely cultivated minds (even when these latter through snobbery try to deny the fact) is at all times the most naturally expressive, that which perfectly translates our deepest sentiments (jubilation, anger, love, or whatever) precisely when these are most strongly felt, that which all of us, all (with the rarest exceptions) use spontaneously—is Créole! I know that it is not considered proper in polite society, that it sometimes lends a certain impression of vulgarity, that it is not the correct language for distinguished people—when they are in public! But who is the man of propriety, who the society woman, who in private does not continually use Créole![14]

12. See P. Crouzet, *Les Ponts romains* (Toulouse, 1929), p. 18.

[796] [793] 13. It must be noted that in the Vodun service the houngan sometimes speaks in *langage*, which is not Créole. It purports to be pure African, but is more likely to be mere gibberish.

14. In his Preface to Faine, *op. cit.*, p. v.